February 24, 2006
New Melones RPO, Biological Sciences Workgroup (BSG)
Meeting Summary

Disclaimer: This meeting summary was prepared by Reclamation as a means of documenting the stakeholder involvement process and recording the events of the meeting that Reclamation staff took note of. If an important point is not included or is not correctly described, you may raise the point again at the next meeting or email your concerns to: 2nmrpo@mp.usbr.gov

Meeting Location: USFWS Offices, Lodi, California
Meeting Time: 10 a.m. to noon

The attendance list is posted as Meeting Attendance Record.pdf.

Brian Deason made a presentation to the group, and the presentation is posted as BSG022406revised.pdf. The presentation described the purpose of the Biological Sciences Workgroup (BSG) as: Providing an opportunity for stakeholders to identify, develop, and critique the biological information required to develop a minimum instream flow schedule for the lower Stanislaus River; and a flow diagram was provided to describe how and when stakeholder input/feedback would be used during the process of identifying, collecting, and analyzing the needed biological information.

Brian also provided updates to the group on past action items, such as adding information to the NMRPO webpage, status of the habitat use investigation, and activities related to the Water Supply Workgroup.

Another action item from the 1/18/06 meeting was to compile a list of existing Stanislaus River fisheries data. Andrea Fuller with S. P. Cramer & Associates provided a "working list" of the information available based on her records. This information is posted as Stanislaus Fishery Data.pdf and Stanislaus Fishery Models.pdf. This list provides a great start for developing a comprehensive inventory of available data. We are requesting that the group review this list for both content and format. Please provide comments, suggestions, or any additional data references prior to the next meeting.

The presentation also included proposed steps for developing the needed biological information: define the objective of the flow schedule; describe how and when target species use the river; identify the information required to determine what flows are needed to achieve the objective; and identify information gaps and studies to fill the gaps. The topic of defining the objective of the flow schedule led to many discussions throughout the meeting. For example, is it a flow standard or minimum flow schedule; what are the targeted species and will spring-run Chinook be included; are there other species that should be addressed; is the flow for protection, restoration, and/or enhancement?

At the 1/18/06 BSG meeting, a suggestion was made that a good starting point for identifying the fisheries information needed for an instream flow schedule was to review what conceptual model would be used to describe how and when fish use the river. As a follow-up to this suggestion, Andrea Fuller with S. P. Cramer & Associates described a conceptual model developed for the Stanislaus River Fish Group draft restoration plan, and she requested meeting participants review the draft document currently posted at http://delta.dfg.ca.gov/srfg/restplan.asp. Andrea also provided a one-page chart from the draft document as an example of how the information from the conceptual model could be "boiled down" to a visual representation of how and when various fish species utilize the lower Stanislaus River posted as Stanislaus Salmon Lifestage Chart.pdf. The fall-run Chinook and steelhead information is based upon data collected in the Stanislaus, and the spring-run Chinook information is based upon information from the literature and other rivers. This chart is intended to provide the group an opportunity to comment on: 1) fish species to consider for an instream flow schedule, 2) life-stage classification for each species, and 3) the timing of key biological activities (spawning, rearing, outmigration, etc…) for each species/life-stage.

Discussion regarding the chart included presence or absence of spring-run Chinook; whether species not listed as T&E would be considered in developing a flow schedule; whether re-introduction of a species and flows to support re-introduction should be considered; and how to modify the chart to reflect the proportion of the population present during different periods (i.e. lighter shades when fish are present in smaller numbers and darker shades for larger numbers).

Please review and provide comments on the life-stage chart to 2nmrpo@mp.usbr.gov. Comments will be reviewed and discussed at the next BSG meeting on March 24th.

As a follow-up to a discussion at the 1/18/06 BSG meeting, Tim Heyne, DFG, shared a one-page document titled "1987 DFG/BOR Agreement Summary Report," posted as DFG_87ag_Summary.pdf. The document identified the seven elements of the Agreement, and is intended to provide a frame-work for a final report on the results of activities described in the 1987 Agreement. Tim noted that DFG believes the resultant report would conclude the Agreement, that it would require about 12 months to complete, and that they would rely on Reclamation to compile data and complete portions of the report.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 24, 10 a.m., USFWS Offices, Lodi, California.